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(54) Abstract Title
Container bearing indicia

(57) A container such as a milk bottle has indicia provided on a rim portion in a manner such as to be obscured by a closure when secured on the container. The indicia may be applied direct to the container rim or to a layer, for example of an opaque medium, on the container. The indicia may comprise information relating to a prize of gift offer or a product promotion campaign. Further information, preferably in the form of a code, may be placed elsewhere on the container.

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A CONTAINER

This invention relates to a container. Specifically, this invention relates to a container comprising an indicia, that can be used in product promotions.

It is known to use the packaging of a product as a means for promoting that product. This may be achieved by advertising a prize or gift on the outside of the packaging. Such an advert may refer to the existence of a prize or gift which would accompany the product as sold or which may be claimed separately, for example from the manufacturers of the product.

Often, it is desirable to conceal the prize or gift within the packaging of the product or within the product itself such that the purchaser is not able to see the prize or gift when purchasing the product. WO 9534481 discloses a beverage bottle closure with a gift or prize compartment for promotional purposes, which has a door on the compartment that can only be opened when the closure is removed from the bottle. WO 9701486 discloses a container comprising a cylindrical body to fit inside the neck of a bottle which does not interfere with the proper seating of the bottle cap on the bottle. WO 9500414 discloses a container end for a beverage container that is designed for retaining a gift or prize, which is guided out of the container when the end is opened. WO 9604181 discloses a ring-pull can with a concealed prize-holding compartment. The container comprises a lid assembly with a genuine lid, and a dummy lid which defines the compartment and which, when opened, reveals the existence of the genuine lid.

However, a problem arises if the container is not suitable for receiving a concealed insert. In such cases, it is possible sometimes to conceal instead an offer of a prize or gift on the packaging of the product as sold. This may be used particularly if the purchaser is not guaranteed to discover an offer of a

prize or gift in respect of each individual product. If an offer of a prize or gift were discovered, the purchaser of the product might then claim the actual prize or gift, for example, by mail or otherwise.

Specifically, it is known to conceal an offer of a prize or gift on the inside surface of the packaging of a product. AU 8287037 and EP 79673 disclose cans with a prize indicia marked on the internal base where the prize indicia is viewable through the pour hole once the can is empty.

More specifically, where the packaging comprises a container with a lid or cap it is known to conceal the offer on the underside of the cap or lid. JP 54111979 discloses a crown closure with a plastic lining where a prize indicia is marked on the inside of a lining which can be stripped from the inside of the opened cap. WO 9729968 discloses a lid for foodstuff containers particularly for prize competitions which comprises a shell which is fitted over the opening of the container bearing an inscription. Various patent applications, including JP 61104964, JP 81001222, JP 2219755, JP 2219756, JP 6048452, and JP 6048453, disclose resin caps for bottled foods which display an offer of a prize on the inside surface of the cap.

Other product promotion campaigns have involved concealing an offer of a prize or gift on the underside of a removable label on the outside of the packaging. FR 2528395 discloses a package with an internal hidden gift and an opaque label, which has a message on its rear face.

However, a further problem arises where a container or packaging for a product is not suitable for receiving a concealed insert within the packaging and is not suitable for concealing an offer of a prize or gift on the inside of the packaging, for example

on the inside surface of a cap or on the underside of a label. In such cases, it has not been possible for containers to be used in product promotion campaigns as described above. This is a problem for manufacturers who already use such containers and who wish to run such a campaign using these containers. It is generally not practical and/or too expensive to introduce new packaging with a significantly altered appearance, just for a promotion. Moreover, consumers may be used to the above type of container for packaging a particular product, such that an alteration would not be welcomed by the market and might lead to reduced sales and loss of profit. Therefore, there is a need for a new type of container, which is capable of concealing an indicia and is not significantly different in appearance to present containers of the above type.

An object of the present invention is to provide a new type of container that solves the above problems.

Accordingly, the present invention provides a container comprising an opening and an indicia, wherein the opening is defined by a rim portion of the container and is adapted to cooperate with a closure for closing the opening and wherein the indicia is situated on the rim portion such that it is obscured by the closure when the closure is in the closed configuration.

The present invention also provides a method for producing a container as defined above, comprising applying the indicia to the container.

The present invention further provides use of a container as defined above, in a product promotion campaign.

The container of the present invention is advantageous in that it allows an indicia, such as a message, to be concealed on the container as sold, without the need for an additional means for obscuring the indicia. Thus, a message can be concealed even if the container is transparent and/or has no label on which a message might be concealed.

The container of the present invention is particularly useful in respect of translucent and transparent liquids through which messages can easily be viewed if the container is also translucent or transparent (such as milk in a milk bottle and mineral water contained in clear plastic bottles).

Thus, in a preferred embodiment, the container or both the container and the contents of the container are substantially translucent or transparent.

It is preferred that the opening of the container is defined by a rim portion. The rim portion is preferably annular and most preferably circular. In the present invention the term "rim portion" may mean the horizontal surface and the vertical surface on the outside of the container which are concealed by the closure when the closure is in a closed configuration and the vertical surface on the inside of the container which corresponds with the afore-mentioned vertical surface on the outside of the container. Alternatively the "rim portion" may mean any portion on the inside or the outside of the container in the proximity of the opening of the container that is obscured by the closure when the closure is in a closed configuration, i.e. when the container is closed or sealed ready for sale.

The indicia on the container is situated on a part of the container which is obscured or concealed from view at the time

of purchase. This part of the container is preferably the rim portion defining the opening of the container.

In the container of the present invention the indicia is preferably situated on a medium for facilitating application of the indicia to the bottle. Preferably the medium is an opaque layer which is placed over the whole or a part of the rim portion. A material suitable for use as the medium must pass all food safety requirements. In the case of a re-usable bottle, the medium should not be affected by the rigours of any cleaning and filling processes. Preferably, the medium is a lacquer layer or an enamel layer. Preferably the lacquer layer or the enamel layer is a thin film layer.

The indicia is preferably information and more preferably a particular message. The indicia can be any form of information or message, but is preferably prize information or a prize message. The indicia may be, for example, a colouring of the container or the medium, or alternatively the indicia may comprise letters, numbers, symbols or a pattern applied to the container, or to the medium. The indicia is preferably a message indicating that the container is a "winning" container.

To check that a container comprises a genuine indicia, the container of the present invention preferably comprises information relating the container to a class of indicia and/or to a specific indicia and/or for verifying whether the container comprises an indicia or not. The information may be placed anywhere on the container.

Preferably, the information relating the container to the indicia is a code, for example in the form of dots or letters or a number. More preferably, the code is a batch code or batch number wherein the batch code or batch number identifies a batch

of containers each of which comprises the same class of indicia or the same indicia. A class of indicia may be, for example, all "winning" indicia or all "losing" indicia. Specific indicia may be, for instance, each different "winning" indicia.

The code or number or other form of information may be marked on the container by any known means of marking. Examples include: printing on the side of the base or the label of a container; embossed codes on the side or the base of a glass or plastics container; laser marking of a plastics container. Preferably, the information should not be obvious as a means of relating the container to the presence of a genuine indicia and the method of marking should be hard to counterfeit without special equipment.

The container of the present invention is preferably used in running a promotion on milk bottles. In such a promotion, an indicia in the form of prize information or preferably a prize message is concealed on a milk bottle. It has previously not been possible to conceal a message on a transparent milk bottle having no label.

It is thus particularly preferred that the container of the present invention is a milk bottle. In the present context, the term "milk bottle" means a container comprising a body portion preferably made from colourless glass and preferably closed or sealed with a foil top. Preferably, the body portion of the bottle is transparent when empty. The body portion defines a circular opening that co-operates with the foil top such that, at the time of sale, the opening is closed or sealed by the foil top. Preferably, the milk bottle does not have a label.

The invention can be applied to any substantially translucent or transparent containers, for example containers formed from coloured glass (such as green glass or brown glass) or containers

formed from colourless or coloured transparent or translucent plastic. Furthermore, the present invention can be applied to containers other than bottles, for example jars and pots.

CLAIMS:

1. A container comprising an opening and an indicia, wherein the opening is defined by a rim portion of the container and is adapted to co-operate with a closure for closing the opening and wherein the indicia is situated on the rim portion such that it is obscured by the closure when the closure is in the closed configuration.
2. A container according to claim 1, wherein the container or both the container and contents of the container are substantially translucent or transparent.
3. A container according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the rim portion is annular.
4. A container according to any preceding claim further comprising a medium for facilitating application of the indicia to the container, the medium being situated between the container and the indicia.
5. A container according to claim 4, wherein the medium is an opaque layer.
6. A container according to claim 5, wherein the opaque layer is a lacquer film or an enamel film.
7. A container according to any preceding claim, wherein the indicia comprises information.
8. A container according to claim 7, wherein the information comprises a message.

9. A container according to any preceding claim, which is formed from glass.

10. A container according to any preceding claim, which is a bottle.

11. A container according to claim 10, wherein the bottle is a milk bottle.

12. A container according to any preceding claim, further comprising information for relating the container to a specific class of indicia, to which the indicia present on that container belongs.

13. A container according to any preceding claim, further comprising information for relating the container to a specific indicia that is present on that container.

14. A container according to any preceding claim, further comprising information for verifying that the container comprises an indicia.

15. A container according to any of claims 12-14, wherein the information is a batch code or batch number.

16. A container according to any preceding claim wherein the indicia is an offer of a prize or gift.

17. A method for producing a container as defined in any preceding claim, comprising applying the indicia to the container.

18. A method according to claim 17, comprising applying the medium to the container and applying the indicia to the medium.

19. Use of a container as defined in any of claims 1-16, in a product promotion campaign.

20. Use according to claim 19, wherein the product is milk.

21. A container substantially as hereinbefore described in any of the Examples.



Application No: GB 9907467.6
Claims searched: 1 to 21

Examiner: Mike Henderson
Date of search: 15 June 1999

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:
UK CI (Ed.Q): B8D (DCW10 DCD DFX DFB DCE)
Int CI (Ed.6): B65D 1/40 51/24 51/28 77/24 77/28 G09F 3/00
Other: ONLINE:WPI,EDOC,JAPIO

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
A	WO 99/03749A1 (PA INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING SERVICES SA) (Figs 8 to 10,15,16,19 & 20 and corresponding description particularly relevant)	1 to 21
X	DE 3317844A1 (ALTHANS) (Fig.2 and corresponding description particularly relevant)	1 to 3,7 to 17,19 & 20

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.